

StoryScreen Presents a Documentary
Directed and Produced by
Brett A. Schwartz

RAISED UP WEST SIDE

CHANGE THE NARRATIVE AND CHANGE LIVES

Featuring West Side Musical Artists
EMONE QUADEEM, BIGG BABY,
AND KID WOND3R

STORYSCREEN

RAISED UP WEST SIDE

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TRT: 86 mins. | Documentary | USA | English | 16:9 | Digital/DCP | Stereo Mix

Raised Up West Side [Trailer](#)

Website: www.raisedupwestside.com | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#)

LOGLINE

In RAISED UP WEST SIDE, we follow the harrowing, yet frequently inspiring plight of ex-offenders, social activists, and entrepreneurs, witnessing the fierce tenacity required to change the narrative — and change lives on Chicago's West Side.

SYNOPSIS

Chicago's West Side epitomizes the violent, struggling city we see daily in the media. RAISED UP WEST SIDE peels back the layers, exposing the deep-seated segregation, food insecurity, and mass incarceration that continue to shape these predominantly Black neighborhoods. Following the harrowing, yet frequently inspiring plight of ex-offenders, social activists, and entrepreneurs working on the West Side, we witness the fierce tenacity required to change the narrative — and change lives.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In 2018 I learned about Professor Jennifer Lackey's philosophy class at Stateville Correctional Center outside Chicago. Lackey pivoted from her standing Northwestern University philosophy courses to teaching inmates and ultimately developing Northwestern's Prison Education Program. I visited Professor Lackey's classes twice. I had never been to a prison before, much less a maximum security state penitentiary. In one class, Lackey focused on the existence of evil in the world — with a group of students that were technically serving life sentences or even on death row. Here I was shaking hands, conversing casually, and even laughing with convicted murderers and rapists as we discussed the weightiest issues of the human condition. The bottom line is that I saw common humanity in the eyes of most of the men I met at Stateville.

Later that year I visited the Farm on Ogden, a brand-new urban farm and market in the North Lawndale neighborhood on Chicago's West Side. Under that building's rehabbed roof rose the headquarters of the Chicago Botanic Garden's Windy City Harvest Program. I discovered Windy City' Harvest's Corps program, a 13-week transitional jobs program that trains a cohort of mostly ex-offenders in urban agriculture. A state of the art aquaponics-based indoor farm that yields loads of fresh produce in the middle of a well-known food desert also rose under the Farm on Ogden's roof.

Several miles away in another West Side neighborhood, I met Liz Abunaw, a Chicago entrepreneur who is striving to build a Black-owned grocery store where none exists — in the Austin neighborhood. While filming near the Farm on Ogden, I soon met students from My Block My Hood My City, taking tourists through what often is regarded as a blighted ghetto. Social activist Jahmal Cole who founded the group flipped the script: area youth engaged those outside the neighborhood to showcase their neighborhood's culture and history in a pride-filled, affirmative way, becoming West Side ambassadors along the way.

Ultimately, the threads of RAISED UP WEST SIDE came together when I met Darius Jones. Darius' journey fully encapsulates the harrowing plight of Black men growing up on Chicago's West Side. He was raised in the East Garfield Park neighborhood, and though his single mom did her very best, she could not save him from the "street life." Darius joined a gang at the age of 13, owned his first gun at 15, and by 19 he had been convicted of aggravated carjacking and sent to Cook County Jail's maximum security facility. While serving his sentence at Cook County, he found out about a progressive jail program that allowed him to learn farming skills and enabled inmates to spend time outside and get highly coveted fresh air. Coming from solitary confinement, this program was a godsend to Darius. Once his public defender uncovered holes in his case that led to an early release due to a guilty plea, Darius entered one of the first Windy City Harvest Corps' cohort groups. The program altered the course of his life, and gave him even more than a second chance.

My initial questions about redemption and second chances came together in these places and within all these stories on Chicago's West Side. From formerly incarcerated individuals to reclaiming land and providing sustenance to a community that desperately needs it, there were seeds of hope growing in The Farm on Ogden and within these West Side neighborhoods. Just like the humanity I saw in the eyes of Statesville's inmates all those years earlier, I committed myself to tell a story in RAISED UP WEST SIDE that humanizes people society conveniently labels as "felons" or "offenders" while shutting the door on them. I was convinced that an audience would find empathy for these individuals -- and give them a second chance.

CONTEXT | STATS

**IN CHICAGO'S FAR WEST SIDE NEIGHBORHOODS,
APPROXIMATELY 80% OF RESIDENTS ARE BLACK.**

**NEARLY 70% OF MEN BETWEEN THE AGES OF 18-54
HAVE BEEN INCARCERATED.**

**CLOSE TO 30% OF FAR WEST SIDE RESIDENTS
LIVE BELOW THE POVERTY LINE.**

Source: Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University

PRINCIPAL CAST / PARTICIPANTS

- **Darius Jones** | Darius is an ex-offender and Windy City Harvest Corps alum success story. Darius is also an inspirational storyteller that writes fiction and works as a route-setter at a rock climbing gym
- **Robin Whaley Smith** | Robin runs the Corps program and helps find full-time employment for those that complete the 13 week cohort
- **Angie Mason** | Angie manages the daily operations of the Windy City Harvest program and was one of the leading boosters advocating for construction of the Farm on Ogden
- **Dr. Wayne Detmer** | Wayne is the visionary Chief Clinical Officer at Lawndale Christian Health who partnered with Windy City Harvest to both conceive of and build the Farm on Ogden
- **Reynaldo Engram** | Reynaldo is an ex-offender, a Corp alumnus, and a current employee working retail at the Farm on Ogden

- **Liz Abunaw** | Liz is a University of Chicago Booth School of Business alum. Following stints at Microsoft and General Mills, Liz is building a Black-owned grocery store on the West Side called Forty Acres Fresh Market
- **Nathaniel Viets-Vanlear** | Nathaniel runs the youth-led tours program and My Block My Hood My City, including the North Lawndale tour
- **Jahmal Cole** | Jahmal is the passionate and inspirational founder of My Block My Hood My City
- **Kelly Larsen** | Kelly supervises the Windy City Harvest staff and has been intimately involved with the Corps program since its beginning
- **Andy McGhee** | Andy is the brains behind the Farm on Ogden's turnkey aquaponics system
- **Shanquell London** | Shanquell is an ex-offender and Corps alum working for Garfield Produce, a partner program that places Corp graduates
- **Pascal Sabino** | Pascal is a young reporter for Chicago's Block Club Chicago website covering the West Side beat

FILMMAKER BIO

[Brett A. Schwartz](#) is an Emmy®-nominated director/producer based in the Chicago area. Schwartz's feature documentary, [INSATIABLE: THE HOMARO CANTU STORY](#) premiered at [SXSW](#) in 2016 and screened in dozens of film festivals, both nationally and internationally, including The Seattle Int'l Film Festival, Napa Valley Film Festival, The Chicago Int'l Film Festival, [Palm Springs Int'l Film Festival](#), and several others. The film is distributed by Virgil Films and has streamed on Hulu, [Amazon](#), [Apple TV](#), and additional services. A short film titled MÁS QUE LA PLAY: PUERTO VALLARTA was nominated for a Regional Emmy Award in 2018. Schwartz's feature-length documentary, [MASHED MEDIA](#) (2010) aired on PBS and is distributed by [Films for the Humanities & Sciences](#). A short film entitled [SHIFTING TRADITIONS](#) (2000) aired on PBS and was distributed by The University of California Center for Media and Independent Learning. In addition to his work as an independent director/producer, Schwartz produced documentaries that aired on several networks, including Bravo, MSNBC, HGTV, Court TV, CBS, and PBS. Schwartz received a Master's in [Documentary Film and Video Production](#) from Stanford University in 1999 and lives in Highland Park, Illinois with his wife and their two children.

FILM STILLS



Darius Jones surveys a climbing wall



Reynaldo Engram at The Farm on Ogden



A Cook County Jail inmate works in the garden



Chicago's West Side from Ogden Avenue, looking east toward the Farm on Ogden and downtown



Liz Abunaw in the future site of Forty Acres Fresh Market in the Austin neighborhood on Chicago's West Side

SELECT CREDITS

DIRECTOR Brett A. Schwartz

PRODUCER Brett A. Schwartz

FEATURING (in order of appearance)

Darius Jones

Angela Mason

Dr. Wayne Detmer

Robin Whaley Smith

Reynaldo Engram

Liz Abunaw

Nathaniel Viets-Vanlear

Jahmal Cole

Kelly Larsen

Pascal Sabino

Shanquell London

Andy McGhee

CINEMATOGRAPHER Brett A. Schwartz

**DRONE OPERATOR /
SECOND CAMERA** Jesus Montero

EDITOR Brett A. Schwartz

ADDITIONAL CAMERA Jonathan Aguilar

**POST PRODUCTION
VIDEO EDITOR/
COLOR CORRECTION** George Patay

**SOUND MIXER/
ADDITIONAL SOUND
DESIGNER** Mark Bandy

FEATURING MUSIC BY Shamartier "Bigg Baby" Rose
Emone "EQ" Quadeem
Kid Wond3r

MUSIC SUPERVISOR L. Bradley Schwartz

MUSIC

"Westside" Written & Performed by Bigg Baby, Courtesy of ABG Entertainment

"Ready Fasho" Written & Performed by Bigg Baby, Courtesy of ABG Entertainment

"Love Hate" Written & Performed by Emone Quadeem, Courtesy of ABG Entertainment

"Ghetto Superstars" Written & Performed by Bigg Baby & Emone Quadeem,
Courtesy of ABG Entertainment

"Bird Food" Written & Performed by DJ Freedom, Courtesy of DJ Freedom

"Wander" Written and Performed by Emmit Fenn, Courtesy of Emmit Fenn

"Backward" Written & Performed by Saidbysed, Courtesy of Saidbysed

"Tangled" Written & Performed by Emmit Fenn, Courtesy of Emmit Fenn

"Thin Places" Written & Performed by Jesse Gallagher, Courtesy of Jesse Gallagher

"You Decide" Written & Performed by Bigg Baby & Emone Quadeem, Courtesy of ABG Entertainment

"That's Cause I Knew" Written & Performed by Emone Quadeem, Courtesy of ABG Entertainment

"Through and Through" Written & Performed by Amulets, Courtesy of Amulets

"No. 8 Requiem" Written & Performed by Esther Abrami, Courtesy of Esther Abrami

"Get it Straight" Written & Performed by Emone Quadeem, Courtesy of ABG Entertainment

"Drifting" Written & Performed by Unicorn Head, Courtesy of Unicorn Heads

"Drop" Written & Performed by Anna Domini Beats, Courtesy of Anno Domini Beats

"24" Written & Performed by Emone Quadeem, Courtesy of ABG Entertainment

"Hop Hip" Written & Performed by Kwon, Courtesy of Kwon

"Traversing" Written & Performed by Godmode, Courtesy of Godmode

"Mission to Mars" Written & Performed by Audio Hertz, Courtesy of Audio Hertz

"Rocks in My Casket" Written & Performed by Emone Quadeem, Courtesy of ABG Entertainment

"Killer" Written & Performed by Emone Quadeem, Courtesy of ABG Entertainment

"Things are Going Southhampton" Written & Performed by Verified Picasso, Courtesy of Verified Picasso

"Again" Written & Performed by Bigg Baby, Courtesy of ABG Entertainment

"Crazy Eyes" Written & Performed by Verified Picasso, Courtesy of Verified Picasso

"Joker" Written & Performed by Causmic, Courtesy of Causmic

"Tangled" Written & Performed by Emmit Fenn, Courtesy of Emmit Fenn

"Groove Tube" Written & Performed by Audio Hertz, Courtesy of Audio Hertz

"Turbo" Written & Performed by Cxdy, Courtesy of Cxdy

"Alone" Written & Performed by Emmit Fenn, Courtesy of Emmit Fenn

"Cest La Vie" Written & Performed by Emone Quadeem, Courtesy of ABG Entertainment

"That's Cause I Knew" Written & Performed by Bigg Baby & Emone Quadeem, Courtesy of ABG Entertainment

"Mink Coat" Written & Performed by Emone Quadeem, Courtesy of ABG Entertainment

"Reup" Written & Performed by Bigg Baby & Emone Quadeem, Courtesy of ABG Entertainment

"Shadows" Written & Performed by Anna Domini Beats, Courtesy of Anno Domini Beats

BEATS & MUSICAL INTERLUDES BY

Kid Wond3r

ADDITIONAL STILLS & FOOTAGE COURTESY OF

Darius Jones

Reynaldo Engram

Liz Abunaw

Latent Design

Footage Firm

National Archives and Records Administration

Twentieth Century Time Machine

Library of Congress Digital Collections

Pond5

Critical Past

WEB DEVELOPER / Joe Frankel

GRAPHIC ART

CONSULTING PRODUCER Aviva Schwartz

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT Maya Schwartz

SPECIAL THANKS

Chicago Botanic Garden, Windy City Harvest
Lawndale Christian Health Center
Eliza Fournier
Erin Benassi
My Block My Hood My City
Forty Acres Fresh Market
Judy & Mark Thomas
Garfield Produce
Matthew Galkin
DP Carlson
Block Club Chicago
Colin Boyle
Dr. Jennifer Lackey
The Northwestern Prison Education Program
Allison Peters
Cook County Sheriff's Office
Cook County Department of Corrections
Cook County Jail
Illinois Department of Corrections
Stateville Correctional Center
CBS 2 - Chicago
ABC 7 - Chicago
ABC News
NBC News
Sears, Roebuck, & Co.
Katherine Darnstadt
Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University
Pearl Dick
Marshan Allen
Returning Citizens Network
Sharone Mitchell
Illinois Justice Project
Sasha Papazafeiropoulos
Prison Yoga Chicago
Dr. Mary E. Patillo
Dr. Andrew Papachristos
Honorable Patricia S. Spratt
North Lawndale Restorative Justice Court
Lawndale Christian Legal Center

Laquantis Davis
Gloria Ciaccio
Katie Heinz Pfingsten
The Salvation Army Freedom Center
Rafael Arredondo
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Ketaurah James
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Rosario Maldonado
Carmella Rocha
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